

Journaling Assignment

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Psychiatric illnesses are largely impactful on an individual's life although they may often be misunderstood. I have very little experience dealing with psychiatric illnesses whether personal or professional and my perceptions about mental health are acquired mostly through entertainment media. I also come from a culture where mental health is rarely addressed and often times regarded as a sign of weakness to seek therapy. My feelings, concerns, fears and expectations regarding psychiatric illnesses have changed over time and I always try to keep an open mind when learning about mental health so that I may grow in understanding of these conditions.

In my limited knowledge of psychiatric illnesses, I held many misconceptions about individuals with these illnesses. I often avoided interaction with people who I suspected had mental health challenges because I was afraid of being put into an uncomfortable situation. However, as I learned more about mental health illnesses, my perception shifted and I began to understand that psychiatric illnesses are more of a complex relationship between biological, psychological and social factors rather than a reflection of a person's character and mental fortitude I once believed.

As I think more about psychiatric illnesses, many different situations come to mind. Scenarios in which an individual has had a positive experience managing their symptoms effectively with the right medications and therapies, but also negative experiences in which another person may not have access to effective treatment. I think about the harmful effects that psychiatric illnesses may have on individuals and their families including stigma and social isolation. These thoughts have contributed to my fears and concerns relating to psychiatric illnesses and I am open to learn more about how to advocate for easier access to effective treatment while reducing the stigma surrounding mental health.

As I continue as a student nurse, I expect to learn about how psychiatric illnesses are treatable conditions that individuals are able to manage in their every day lives. I believe that with the proper treatment and support, individuals with mental health issues can still find fulfillment and meaning in life. However, I also recognize that treatment is not always effective or even accessible and there is still much to learn about these conditions.

In terms of what I hope to learn about psychiatric illnesses, there are a few questions I am interested in finding answers to. My first question would be how we are able to identify the varying causes of psychiatric illnesses and how may we prevent these conditions from manifesting? I believe that catching a potential problem early gives the best way to prevent that problem from occurring and though it may not be so simple, the concept may still be applied to the prevention of mental health illnesses. Second, how may we as healthcare providers help reduce the stigma associated with psychiatric illnesses and promote society's understanding and acceptance? I have seen firsthand the way entire families will ignore mental health issues as if ignoring the problem makes it less real. I hope that as more people raise awareness to these issues, more people are presented with opportunities to grow in understanding. Lastly, how may we improve the accessibility and effectiveness of treatment particularly to those that may have financial or social barriers? Certain individuals may find themselves marginalized and may be prevented from receiving the help they need and may encounter more harm than healing.

In conclusion, my introspection about psychiatric illnesses has been both challenging and eye opening. While I may have concerns about the stigma surrounding those who suffer from these conditions, I also feel compassion for them. I hope that in the future, mental health care will become more accessible, affordable and that we as a society will continue to work to reduce the stigma associated with psychiatric illnesses.